

the end.

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Character:	The Darkling Aleksander Morozova
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by [for darkness shows the stars](#)

Summary

The creatures tear at his skin, at his clothes, at his very essence. Without the divine protection of the Sun Summoner, he is as vulnerable as he hasn't been in centuries; before he mastered the inky tendrils of shadow at his fingertips.

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The Darkling doesn't survive the Fold.

Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

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In here, this monument to his rage and loneliness, his grief, the great power that has sustained him, saved him, embraced him is a *liability*. Briefly, he wonders whether the volcra are attracted to him because he is a Shadow Summoner, or if they sense that he is the one who made them as they are.

Razor-sharp teeth dig into his shoulder; the bullet-proof corecloth of his kefta unable to resist the volcra's jaws.

It really is poetic, he thinks, as the Cut whirls through the creature and severs it in half, only to reveal yet another, larger and uglier behind it, that he should die here, torn apart by the ones he had corrupted himself.

The volcra bears down on him.

Aleksandr's fingers curl into claws with massive effort, too-dark blood dripping down his hands. Maybe this very creature before him had once been King Anastas's general. That, too, would be wonderfully poetic. Let it never be said he has no appreciation of the finer things in life.

The volcra is torn apart from the inside, blackness darker even than the Fold erupting from its fanged mouth, its grotesque eyes. But it's not enough. There are so many of them, all called to him.

And he is all alone.

That—that shouldn't make something in his chest ache, more forceful and excruciating than the countless injuries, gashes on his face, his back, his chest, *everywhere*.

He's been *alone* for five hundred years.

He's used to *alone*.

Alone is what he *does*.

.

But you didn't have to be, and *Saints* even the voice in his head sounds like her, all choked-up, her dark eyes shining in the candlelight. The Stag's antlers had protruded from her shoulders grotesquely, the skin red and inflamed.

She'd melded them completely to her bones, back on the skiff.

After she'd stabbed the knife through his hand.

Before her tracker threw them both off, and into the darkness.

We could've had this, she'd told him, her hands still clasped around his, and he'd wanted to crawl at her feet and weep for forgiveness like a *child* he hadn't been in centuries.

But he hadn't. For the same reason, he'd wager, why he didn't let her in on his plans.

He'd been too deep in, centuries-long schemes put into motion by her appearance. His Sun Summoner. His Alina.

And for all those plans, all the preparations, he never could have planned for *her*.

And he couldn't risk the survival of his people, *their* people, not like this. Not on the whim of a young woman who, for all that those beautiful dark eyes were too old for her face, aged with the horrors she'd seen, hadn't grown up as Grisha. Hadn't seen what he'd seen, hadn't lived what he had lived, what they had *all* lived.

Or maybe he had just been a coward, and now he's making excuses.

Maybe he would've told her, if she hadn't left him.

If she'd given him time.

He doesn't know.

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Heavens above, he doesn't know.

.

He's crawling now, bones shattered, skin and cloth torn. Warm blood washes over his face, his hands, his chest, and *Saints*, Aleksandr wants to drown in it, let the darkness that has been his most faithful companion in his long, long life swallow him whole.

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His fingers hit stone—cracked and damaged with age, but without a doubt man-made. Through the blariness and the bloodloss, he recognizes the steps.

It's where it all began.

The fortress had been desolate four hundred years ago. He would have expected it to be no more than dust now, but maybe the volcra could feel what had happened here.

Maybe they steered clear, the suffocating darkness too much even for them.

Well.

Aleksandr is a creature of darkness. It welcomes him.

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The decision isn't made consciously. He is not sure he has it in him to make conscious, rational decisions anymore.

Thinking hurts, breathing hurts, *living* hurts.

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The inside is surprisingly well-kept. Maybe the volcra *do* steer clear of this place.

Whatever.

He is dying, he feels it in his shattered bones, ravaged skin, empty chest. The volcra are the last thing he should think about.

...

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It hurts to think about everything else.

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Aleksandr finds he doesn't *care*, he's dying, what's a little more *hurt*?

He knows where he's going; he thinks he'd know this path even blind and deaf. He'd traversed it too many times in his dreams.

The barren hallways are seared into his memory.

.

It's dark, but darkness has never hindered him.

Or at least, not in a long, long time.

But nevertheless, he sees it now. A plain, stone table. And atop it, white human bones. There's something beautiful about the way she rests there, undisturbed, peaceful. In the early decades after her death, he'd taken to thinking of the Fold as a monument to his love for her. An eternal shadow over Ravka, the price he made the whole country pay for the sin of its king.

Even if it was unintentional.

Especially if it was unintentional.

Maybe he had just needed an explanation. Some *reason*, lest the guilt swallow him whole.

.

And still, her face is seared into Aleksandr's memory as surely as these hallways are, as Alina's would always be. Not that that's a very long time, he thinks with some amusement.

Luda's name escapes his lips in a broken whimper. He can barely stand the sight of these lifeless bones, not when he remembers what she used to be. Her bright, dark eyes, her mischievous smirk, the cutting wit and the softer, sweeter smile reserved only for him.

His vision swims, blotches of dark appearing before his eyes, and he knows he's running out of time. The thought is ... comforting.

He's *so tired*.

.

And so Aleksandr Ilyich Morozov, the Black Heretic, curls up at the feet of his beloved. As the faces of Luda, of Alina, of Baghra, of every Grisha he has watched over and seen die swim before his eyes, the Darkling waits for darkness to claim him.

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He doesn't have to wait long.

.

End Notes

So, as you can probably gather, i watched S&B while ill with Covid ... fell in love with this asshole despite my best efforts ... and here I am now.

[Tumblr.](#)

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